



### **The Ecuador Project in Salinas de Guaranda**

For the past 6 years, The College of Business at Arkansas State University has sponsored two annual trips during each of the semester breaks for students to gain experiential learning through service learning. Each break, we take from 15-20 students who are enrolled in the undergraduate class called Global Leadership Experience to the Village.

- Students voluntarily decide to participate and undertake fundraising activities to supplement the University's support for their expenses. Average cost of the trip is around \$2,500 per student.
- Students are assigned to work as consultants in various micro-industries throughout the village. They get hands on experience in the businesses and later give a report to the businesses and the village cooperative.
- Students also participate in a MINGA (day of Service) with the village and each year we have planted more than 1,000 trees to help with the erosion problems that the village has encountered. These trees are bought by the students and members of our Rotaract Club at Arkansas State University.
- The primary benefactor here are the students who learn to adapt to a different cultural in a developing country and they practice their language skills. Students develop an understanding of how different cultural values and economic conditions affect the citizens of the village and the marketplace.
- Students remark that it was a life changing experience realizing how people live without the basic essentials of life and how they can make a difference for others.
- This project has resulted in a collaborative effort between Arkansas State University, The Jonesboro University Rotary Club and Rotary International to build a \$140,000 hydroelectric system that will be sustainable for the Village. The excess electricity generated will return over \$20,000. To the cooperative each year.
- Another collaborative project is underway with Heifer International to donate \$50,000 worth of Alpacas to the village to provide another sustainable impact by introducing a better quality of wool for the textile industry in Salinas.